

# HEART OF AMERICA

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## MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS REVIEW

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER SERVING THE MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS UNITS OF IOWA, KANSAS, MISSOURI AND NEBRASKA

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### Upcoming Events and Training

**Topics in Public Health Preparedness.** July 20-21, 2006 in Lake Tahoe, CA. Sponsored by the UCLA Center for Public Health and Disasters. Includes one-day workshops on Conducting a Hazards Risk Assessment and Risk Communication: Working in a Joint Information Center. For more information, visit [www.cphd.ucla.edu/](http://www.cphd.ucla.edu/).

**2006 NACCHO Annual Conference.** July 26-28, 2006 in San Antonio, TX. Sponsored by the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO). For more information, call (202) 783-5550 or visit the organization's website at: <http://www.naccho.org/conferences/NACCHOannual06/>.

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**Disaster Planning for Hospitals.** August 9-11, 2006 in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by World Research Group. For more information, e-mail [info@worldrg.com](mailto:info@worldrg.com) or visit <http://www.worldrg.com/showConference.cfm?confCode=HW675>.

### REGION VII



**Missouri Public Health Volunteers Symposium.** August 24, 2006 in Jefferson City, MO. Sponsored by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. For more information, contact Sharlet Howren at [howres@dhss.mo.gov](mailto:howres@dhss.mo.gov).

**International City/County Management Association (ICMA) 92nd Annual Conference.** September 10-13, 2006 in San Antonio, TX. The conference features a track on emergency management. For more information, visit the ICMA website at [www.icma.org/](http://www.icma.org/).

**2006 National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT) Annual Meeting and EMS Expo.** September 25-29, 2006 in Las Vegas, NV. Visit [www.naemt.org/annualMeetingAndExpo/](http://www.naemt.org/annualMeetingAndExpo/) for more information.

**2006 Disaster Mental Health Conference.** November 8-11, 2006 in Casper, WY. Sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Region Disaster Mental Health Institute. For more information, visit <http://www.rmrinstitute.org/call2006.pdf>.

**IAEM Annual Conference and EMEX Exposition.** November 12-15, 2006 in Orlando, FL. Sponsored by the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). For more information, visit [www.iaem.com](http://www.iaem.com).

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## Reno County MRC in the Spotlight

The Reno County, KS MRC is highlighted in the June 2006 "Spotlight" feature of the MRC website (<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/Spotlights/Unit/2006/June>). Founded in June 2004, the Reno County MRC is sponsored by the Reno County Health Department in partnership with the Volunteer Center at Hutchinson Community College. The primary purpose of the Reno County MRC is to assist with the distribution of pharmaceuticals to the community during an emergency and provide surge capacity to local response agencies and hospitals. The Reno County MRC has 42 volunteers; 25 are medical and 17 are non-medical.

Some highlights of the unit's activities and achievements include:

- From April to December of 2005, the Reno County MRC held free diabetes screenings once a week and continues in 2006 with screenings at special events. Also, the unit conducted free blood pressure checks every Wednesday in May 2005 for National High Blood Pressure Awareness Month.
- In November 2005, the Reno County MRC participated in a mass pharmaceutical distribution exercise. Twelve MRC volunteers staffed positions in the POD.
- The Reno County MRC has an ongoing agreement with the local fire department to provide rehabilitation to fire fighters responding to extended scenes. The unit's involvement with the 2005 countywide exercise was praised by the fire department's battalion chief as "the best run rehab sector I've ever seen."
- In February 2006, the Reno County MRC conducted 101 diabetes screenings at the "Battle of the Badges" blood drive, surpassing its goal of 100 screenings for the event.
- In April 2006, the Reno County MRC participated in a 3-day blood drive.
- During the week of June 19, 2006, the Reno County MRC held diabetes screenings during a local blood drive. In addition, on July 1, 2006, the unit will conduct diabetes screenings at the annual "Hutch Fest."
- In 2005, the Reno County MRC received a grant from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to promote community health. The grant provided equipment for diabetes screening. In addition, the company Roche donated equipment to the MRC unit for screenings. The unit has conducted more than 700 diabetes screenings since it began this effort in April 2005; 240 screenings were conducted in 2006.
- Many Reno County MRC volunteers are also Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members; of the 61 members of the Reno County CERT program, 12 are MRC volunteers.

For more information on the Reno County MRC, contact Tim Newman, MRC Coordinator, at (620) 694-2900 or [tim.newman@renogov.com](mailto:tim.newman@renogov.com). Congratulations to the Reno County MRC for their outstanding achievements!

## Nebraska/Western Iowa MRC Honors Volunteers and Partners

Each April, the United Way of the Midlands, the sponsor of the Nebraska/Western Iowa MRC, honors the community's outstanding volunteers. On April 25, 2006, the Nebraska/Western Iowa MRC honored several individuals and organizations for significant contributions to the MRC unit at the United Way of the Midlands' 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon.



David Smith (r) receives the Linda Horning MRC Volunteer of the Year Award from Fred Horning

The Nebraska/Western Iowa MRC awarded its first "Linda Horning MRC Volunteer of the Year Award" to Otho David Smith. David donated 320 hours to the MRC in 2005. According to Vickie Stevens, MRC Coordinator, "David is a volunteer who's always ready to help, no matter where or when. Already in 2006 David has helped at the Girl Scouts World Thinking Day, Sarpy County Preparedness Fair, Omaha Salute to Safety and the College World Series."

The award is named for Linda Horning, who was a very active member of the Nebraska/Western Iowa MRC who passed away last year. "Linda Horning was always the first to volunteer for everything," according to Vickie Stevens. David was presented the award by Linda's husband, Fred.

The MRC also presented four awards for community partnership. The first community partnership award was presented to the Omaha Fire Department for allowing the Nebraska/Western Iowa MRC to train with them at events throughout the city. The second award went to the Omaha Safety Council for allowing the Nebraska/Western Iowa MRC to use their facilities for training. The third award was given to the Papillion-LaVista School District, also for allowing the Nebraska/Western Iowa MRC to use their facilities for training. The fourth community partnership award was presented to Walgreen's for establishing a pharmacy at the community's reception center for Hurricane Katrina evacuees.



Walgreen's representatives receive a community partnership award

### Emergency Preparedness for MRC Units: Lessons Learned

Recently, the MRC national program office sent MRC Listserv members information on "lessons learned" from emergency response and recovery efforts during the 2005 hurricane season. Although these lessons are based on hurricane response and recovery efforts, they are applicable to any emergency, and MRC units in Region VII are encouraged to review and, to the extent possible, implement these lessons. Following is the information from the MRC national program office:

As we are now in the midst of another hurricane season, we must not forget the lessons learned from Katrina, Rita and Wilma. It is crucial to take the successes and failures of the previous hurricane season and transform each MRC unit into a stronger, more efficient and knowledgeable team of volunteers. Using our previous experiences will help us to be better prepared—as individuals and a nation.

### Volunteers

Volunteers are the basis of the Medical Reserve Corps. Without them, there would be no way of effectively responding to local, state and national emergencies such as the hurricane season of last year. Because volunteers are crucial to the safety of the American people, we must make sure that they are prepared for the next emergency. From the 2005 response and recovery missions, we found that:

- It is best if volunteers are identified prior to the emergency, as processing new volunteers while



Members of the Omaha Fire Department receive a community partnership award



simultaneously responding is difficult. However, put spontaneous volunteer processing policies and procedures in place now because they will show up.

- Volunteers must be credentialed. As a minimum, verify that licenses/certificates are current and unencumbered. Doing this prior to the emergency is best.
- Develop a standard check list for screening potential volunteers.
- Volunteers should be flexible, as assignments often change.
- Volunteers are important, so make them feel that way!
- Pre-identify members interested in deploying outside the local area.

### **Instructions and Information**

Information is power. With a structured environment and knowledgeable volunteers, we are more likely to successfully overcome whatever obstacle we encounter.

- Update unit profiles on the MRC website.
- All MRC members should attain the MRC core competencies (<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/TRAINResources>) and meet NIMS compliance requirements.
- Tell volunteers what they are doing, where they are going, and the conditions of their location.
- Partner with volunteer and response agencies in the community, and ensure that the MRC is included in local emergency operations plans.

### **Communication**

To promote unity and a strong working environment, each MRC unit must stay in contact with its members.

- Establish a well-organized chain of command.
- Provide volunteers with emergency MRC phone numbers.

- Deployed volunteers should have regular contact with their MRC units.

By incorporating these and other lessons learned from the 2005 hurricane season into the management and training of MRC volunteers, we are proving that every cloud indeed has a silver lining. With each hurricane, we learn more about what makes an effective MRC unit, and how we can best support our nation during times of need.

MRC leaders and volunteers are encouraged to look at the MRC *Final Hurricane Report* [www.medicalreservecorps.gov/Hurricane/2005Report](http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/Hurricane/2005Report) to learn more about the challenges and successes faced by the MRC in 2005.

### **Mid-America MRC Participates in Exercise**



**Mid-America MRC members (in dark blue shirts) dispense medication during the POD exercise**

On June 23, 2006, over 200 volunteers, including members of the Mid-America MRC, participated in a mass prophylaxis exercise in Liberty, MO. MRC volunteers participated in the exercise as “victims” and also staffed a variety of positions associated with mass dispensing operations at a Point of Distribution (POD) site. The goal of the exercise was to give health care and emergency personnel experience with a computer program designed to facilitate the efficient dispensing of medication to citizens in the event of a biological incident. Representatives of many of the region’s public health agencies and hospitals were present at the event to gain experience with the computer program, which has been installed at 23 area hospitals and eight public health organizations.